

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I did not intend to cast this debate today on the issue of whether or not gun-free zones are good public policy or not, nor is it my intent to get into a long, involved debate over the issue of gun control. My intent, by bringing this issue to you, is to suggest that after the debate on the juvenile crime package on the issue of guns, which took, I suppose, three or four days to resolve, that I felt it would be in the best interest of both the juvenile bill and the issue of gun control as it relates to children that the issues be separated. And that my intent in bringing LB 1018 to you is to suggest a vehicle where we can strip, or take out, or delete from the juvenile bill those sections dealing with children and guns on a school property and debate those separately on a...in a separate...in a separate bill. The problem with the juvenile bill, and as it relates to the gun issue, is two-fold. One is, first of all, there's the public policy issue of whether or not confiscation is the appropriate remedy, or should there be a stiffer penalty. I happen to be one who believes that confiscation, though a good idea, should be only part of a stiffer penalty than what is already in the bill. I believe it's either a misdemeanor III, or a misdemeanor IV, that the very least that it should be a misdemeanor I, or even a felony IV if there was a serious event occurring with the gun on school grounds. That's a public policy argument. The second concern that I have is that the exceptions, as set forth in the juvenile bill on guns and children, are not clearly set forth, that it's somewhat confusing, if not totally confusing as to what the exceptions are. There are some very generally well accepted exceptions to gun-free zones that are actually included in federal legislation on gun-free zones, and those exceptions are set forth in LB 1018. And thirdly, there may be other debate in this session on the issue of gun control, or children and guns and violence that may potentially detract from the very solid, positive public policy considerations that are included in LB 988, the juvenile crime package. So, what I would suggest to the body that we do is, and quite frankly, another reason for me is that somewhat the lessening of penalties for kids and guns in the juvenile crime package is not appropriate public policy, in my opinion; that we, in effect, are lessening the penalties to a degree in the juvenile crime package. But that's just my view. The idea, and I don't want to get into a crack on the juvenile crime package where I believe that what we've done, at least personally....Mr. President, can I...